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C O N F I D E N T I A L SOFIA 000234

SIPDIS

EUR/CE FOR TOM YEAGER
WHA/CCA FOR GABRIALA ZAMBRANO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/19/2029
TAGS: [ERTD](#) [ETTC](#) [PREL](#) [CU](#) [BU](#)
SUBJECT: CUBAN-BULGARIAN RELATIONS

REF: SECSTATE 00805

Classified By: Political Counselor James Bigus for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) The Government of Bulgaria (GOB) maintains friendly, yet minimal relations with Cuba. Political contact and economic ties are minimal. The GOB has made no recent statements on democracy or human rights issues in Cuba, and can generally be expected to follow the European Union position on these issues. End summary.

¶2. (C) Post's response to reftel questions are as follows:

- Democracy and Human Rights

The GOB has not directly addressed human rights issues in Cuba. The GOB primarily addresses human rights issues within a multilateral context and following the position of the European Union.

- Public Statements

The GOB has not made statements or resolutions specifically regarding human rights in Cuba. Although in September 2008, the Bulgarian Parliament endorsed the Prague Declaration, 'European Conscience and Communism,' critical of Communist regimes.

- Diplomatic Visits With Cuba

In May 2009, the GOB hosted the 9th session of the Bulgarian-Cuban Joint Committee on Economic, Trade, and Research and Development in Sofia, Bulgaria. The GOB was represented by Deputy Minister for Economy and Energy Yavor Kuiumdjiev. The Cuban delegation was lead by Deputy Minister of Foreign Investment and Economic Partnership Ricardo Gerraro Blanco. The meeting focused on developing bilateral trade ties and discussions focused on trade, information technology, and agricultural production.

- Business and Investments

Economic ties between Bulgaria and Cuba are minimal. Estimates for 2008 show Bulgaria had a trade surplus with Cuba of around USD 7 million. Bulgarian imports from Cuba shrunk significantly in recent years, totaling approximately USD 3 million in 2007 and 2008, from USD 11 million in 2006. Reed sugar (90%) was the primary import, followed by tobacco products and alcohol. Bulgarian exports to Cuba have almost doubled since 2006, reaching almost USD 10 million in 2008. Exports were made up of electrical transformers, insecticides, liquid pumps, and auto parts.

- Bilateral Trade Agreements or Other Cooperative Agreements

The governments of Bulgaria and Cuba have the following bilateral agreements:

Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation, signed November 1998

Agreement on the Protection and Mutual Promotion of Investments, signed December 1998

Agreement on Cooperation Between the Two Chambers of Commerce, signed February 1998

Agreement on Veterinary Issues, signed August 2000

Agreement in the Area of Quarantine and Plant Protection, signed August 2000

Agreement on cooperation in Agricultural and Rural Development, signed 2000

Agreement on Maritime Trade, signed 2006

Joint Program in Education, Science and Culture in 2003-2006, signed June 2006

Agreement on the Cooperation in Postal Services, in process

Six Protocols resulting from the work of the Joint Committee on Economic, Trade, and Research and Development

- Exchange Programs

There appears to be very few, if any, official exchange programs between Bulgaria and Cuba.

McEldowney